



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Arthur A. Schomburg Elementary School**

**Elementary School X163**

**2075 Webster Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10457**

**Principal: Dilsia Martinez**

**Date of review: May 01, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Hadiya J. Daniel-Wilkins**

## The School Context

Arthur A. Schomburg is an elementary school with 566 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 32% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 39% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for individual and groups of students.

### Impact

Teachers have designed coherent curricula in all subjects that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and they engage a variety of learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional bundles included the following content: unit snapshots, complete suggested alignment to the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, ideas for learning centers, book lists, family engagement, culminating tasks and rubrics, sample weekly plan, sample lesson plans, samples of student work, and supporting resources. Each unit also contained references to Depth of Knowledge and Universal Design for Learning, which help teachers determine the cognitive demand of lessons, tasks and assessments. Highlighted in units were also the inclusion of pictures of teachers demonstrating performance expectations, and samples of student work product exemplars. For example, in one pre-kindergarten unit a teacher is seen demonstrating to students the concepts of adding and subtracting using the task of, "Create your story about trucks by adding and or subtracting within five trucks." Students were observed working collaboratively to engage in a task that provided them access to the Common Core Learning Standard of "counting to tell the number of objects."
- Teachers design units with task rubrics to provide all students with task performance expectations for producing standards-based products that reflect the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards shifts. For instance, in first grade general education, English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities all have rubrics for producing both Informational/Explanatory and Opinion/Persuasive writing tasks. Teachers also provide a space on all rubrics for affixing a rating and allowing students to note their next steps for demonstrating their mastery in each writing criterion. Further, in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math, teachers intentionally note differentiated tasks, in units, to provide a variety of learners opportunities to access content. For the mastering of the Common Core State Standard of 3.MD.8, "Solve real world and mathematical problems involving perimeter of polygons," students are targeted for working in, "Tier1, 2, 3 and enrichment groups," to ensure chances for meeting and or exceeding the standards.
- Teachers across grades use student work products to plan and revise curricula and academic tasks to cognitively engage all students. For example, for the task of "Opinion Writing," in 4th grade, teachers review of students' work samples uncovered that students struggled with punctuation. Teachers used this finding to revise curricular and tasks to include, "different types of punctuation, and give assignments of sentences that require punctuation marks, in order to make the use of punctuation more relevant," for diverse groups of learners.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Discussions and student work products reflect inconsistent levels of thinking and participation.

### Impact

Uneven implementation of Danielson Framework for Teaching resulted in limited occasions for students to demonstrate high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices reflected a belief that questioning was important to students' learning. Questions observed, however, were teacher-directed. Queries posed to students often led to students performing at a recall level. Teachers were also heard presenting students with a series of questions to elicit one-word responses. For example, in a reading class, the attending teacher was heard asking students, "Was it an important event? What would the event be? Pick a buddy!" providing limited opportunities for students to think about a response to the series of questions.
- While the instructional practice of have students turn and talk as a method for increasing student engagement was evident in some classrooms, teachers afforded students no more than one minute for discourse. Moments for student engagement in cognitively challenging discussions, to increase experiences with understanding content and utilization of academic vocabulary, were uneven across classrooms.
- Students were observed using post-its in classrooms, when reading selected novels. Post-its, however, were primarily used as page holders. Instances for using post-its to highlight specific comprehension constructors such as questioning the author, noting a wondering, noting a connection, or expressing any confusion with the text were limited. Student opportunities to demonstrate high levels of interaction with the content in the text are evolving.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, and grading policies are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing check for understanding.

### Impact

Students are receiving actionable feedback and teachers are making effective adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers use the students' performance results of New York State math and English assessments, New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarks, New York City Schoolnet Item Analysis Benchmarks, Running Records, unit assessments, daily checklist and conferencing to ascertain if students are, "far below the standard, approaching the standard, meeting the grade level standard, or exceeding the standard." Teachers' reported that the information garnered from these assessments informed the following: "Content to reteach, composition of student groupings, and the data to help determine if students' individual education plans are aligned to the Common Core Standards."
- The staff routinely practices conferencing with students to provide feedback on assessment outcomes. For example, review of the writing conference notes of a 3rd grade teacher uncovered the following feedback on a student's writing assessment: "Unit of Study: Changing the World; Compliment: Good Thesis, Good Evidence; Instructional Focus/Strategy Taught: Outlining reasons and Evidence; Next Steps: 1. Organize evidence into categories, 2. Notice Patterns, 3. Use patterns to come up with reasons." A student classified as an ELL received this feedback to support the development of his writing skills.
- Teachers' assessment practices customarily include assessment rubrics with the following categories: "Important notes about the child, if the student attained proficiency, and if the student made progress." For example, a teacher of a 5th grade student noted under the heading of, "Important notes about this child:" "This student is an at-risk level 4 due to the following reasons: achieved 1 on ELA for two years, achieved insufficient score in one or more modalities: missed proficient level in listening by 1 raw score point." In conversation with teachers, they shared that using identified English as a second language strategies would be the next teaching steps for supporting the student's learning needs.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for all staff for instructional and professional development practices. Teaching staff has established a culture for learning that regularly conveys high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

A system of accountability for supporting the development of staff, students and families to achieve academic, professional and supporting goals has been established.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers and guidance staff have instituted a system for students’ academic goal setting. Across grades, students are expected to set academic performance goals that are periodically scrutinized to monitor progress. For example, in September, a 4th grade student noted the following on her goal-setting sheet: “This year I want to grow as a writer. In order to grow, I will practice and focus more on adding details. My favorite writing is nonfiction, because I like to talk about realistic fiction...” In January on this student’s Mid-Year Goal Setting Progress Sheet, she then noted, “When I write, I know I am really good at ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency. Thus far I have learned the strategies of: Arc Charts, circle maps, flow maps and books to help my ideas for writing.” The staff is continuing to work on a culture of mutual accountability for student goal expectations.
- Teachers are expected to execute instructional practices in the school’s system known as “Code Red.” With the focus of professional development on Danielson’s Framework for Teaching in Domain 3, teachers are held responsible to prepare for the code of Rigor, Engagement, and Differentiation in their daily repertoire. The coaching on the topics of “Using Visuals and Other Effective Teaching Strategies to Engage Students, Using Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning, Question and Discussion, and Using Assessment Effectively to Differentiate in Reading and Math” continue to support the expectations of “Code Red.”
- The school leaders and staff have steadily provided families a series for workshops to cement a partnership for supporting their children to succeed at the next level. Parents expressed that through conferences, phone calls, newsletter and workshops, they are constantly informed of the performance expectations for their children. Parents shared that the school has provided them workshops on the following: library skills and cards, math help, nutrition, science, housing, fire safety and the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Across grades, each unit contained sub-sections for “Family Engagement Opportunities.” In discussion with parents, they shared that teacher and school leaders provided conference opportunities for them to see curricula upon request. Parents of ELLs and students with disabilities expressed that rubrics, which are usually affixed to homework assignments, were instrumental in allowing them to support their children as they complete homework tasks.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Teachers routinely meet to discuss instructional approaches tailored at improving students' learning, and the distributed leadership structures have led to students having a voice in school policy.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet two times each week to discuss students' work for the purpose of identifying students' learning needs. For example, the 4th grade teacher team met to discuss an identified student. The student was described as a, "reluctant writer with little confidence." Samples of the student's work revealed that his writing was minimal. One teacher shared that the student had a learning disability and received speech therapy. The discussion of the student's learning needs highlighted that he was currently receiving support with Spanish translation, sentence frames, word banks, a personal word wall and building his sight words. Teachers conferred with one another on the next steps for the identified student. The list of recommendations was to use the database for reading known as Pebblego.com, utilize positive reinforcement, increase his independence and confidence, enroll him for after school support with the Imagine Learning literacy software, and include sight work cards for visual learning. Teachers are continuing to work on becoming integral role players in making key decisions for students.
- A teacher team met to discuss what they deemed was necessary next instructional shifts to improve the performance of third graders. This teacher team was conducting a case study of a selected student who struggled with writing. In January, this team had identified the student's struggles as, "limited attempts to complete the work." The recommendation at that time was that of having the child complete an interest inventory, use sight word book and have a paraprofessional shadow the student. This team decided that praise and lots of visual support should serve as the best instructional approaches for the ongoing learning of the student being studied.
- In professional collaborations, teachers could be heard sharing professional practices necessary to improve student engagement in their classrooms. Teachers mentioned that in order to demonstrate an effective or highly effective performance of the school's goals of rigor, engagement and differentiation they had to strengthening their practices and capacity in the areas of presenting high-order questions to students, increasing opportunities for students to ask their own questions, and trusting students to own their discussions. Efforts to make these goals school-wide are ongoing.